

10. THE SERMON AT BENARES

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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INTRODUCTION

Gautama Buddha was born in 563 B.C. He was philosophical even in his childhood. He was sent for schooling at the age of twelve. He married at the age of sixteen. They had a son. When he was twenty-five years old, one day when he was going for hunting he caught sight of a sick man, an aged man, a dead man's funeral procession and a monk. He realised that this world is a home of sufferings. He left home in search of wisdom. He wandered for seven years and got enlightenment

THE THEME OF THE STORY '

Sermon At Benares' is the story of an unfortunate woman Kisa Gotami. She had lost her only one. In her grief, she carried the dead body of her son from one place to another. In the end, she came to Lord Buddha. She needed the medicine that could cure her son. Then Buddha asked her to bring him a handful of mustard seed from a house where no one had lost a child, husband, parent or friend. Kisa Gotami didn't find a house where some beloved one had not died in it. She thought to herself that it was the fate of mankind. Death was inevitable. Nobody can avoid dying. The world is afflicted with death and decay. The wise don't grieve. 'He who has overcome all soon will become free from sorrow, and be blessed.'

WORD-MEANINGS:

Sacred = pious sculptures = religious books); betted -= suited; royalty = kingly family; heretofore = till then shielded = protected chanced upon = saw by chance funeral procession = procession of a dead body for cremation monk= mendicant alms = begging enlightenment -spiritual knowledge witnessed = saw vowed = swore Preached = gave sermons sermon = preaching dipping paces=place where people take bath preserved = protected reflects = shows inscrutable = mysterious at length = in the end physician = doctor repaired=(here) went mustard-seed = an oil seed procure = get grief = sorrow weary = tired hopeless = in despair flickered up = shone extinguished = put out desolation = deep sorrow immortality = deathlessness surrendered = submitted mortals = human beings Earthen vessels = pot made of baked clay potter = one who makes pots overcome = controlled by depart = go away kinsmen = relatives mark = look lamenting = grieving slaughter = killing afflicted with = affected by decay = rotting/degeneration pale = yellow composed = controlled blessed = the one who gets blessing

DETAILED SUMMARY

Gautama Buddha was born in 563 B.C. He was born in a royal family. He was a prince. His name was Siddhartha Gautama. At the age of twelve, he was sent away for schooling. He studied all the sacred Hindu scriptures. He returned after four years. At the age of sixteen, he married a

princess. They had a son. For ten years the couple passed a happy life. Siddhartha had been shielded from the sufferings of the world. However, when he was twenty-five, Siddhartha saw a sick man, then an aged man, then a funeral procession. Finally, he came across a monk begging for alms. This was his first encounter with the harsh realities of life. These sights made him so sad that he decided to renounce the worldly pleasures. He left his family and became a beggar. He went out into the world to seek spiritual knowledge.

Siddhartha Gautama wandered for seven years in search of wisdom and truth. Finally, he sat down under a peepal tree to meditate. He vowed to stay there until he got enlightenment. After seven days, Gautama got enlightenment. He named the tree as the 'Bodhi Tree' that is 'The tree of wisdom'. He became known as 'the Buddha' which means 'enlightened' or 'the awakened'. He began to teach and to spread his message of wisdom and truth. He became known as the Buddha (the enlightened)

Buddha gave his first sermon at Benares. It is the holiest of places on the bank of the Ganges. His first sermon reflects his wisdom about one inscrutable kind of suffering i.e. death. Here, the Buddha tells about the universality of death which is inevitable and can't be escaped.

A lady named Kisa Gotami had an only son. One day, her son died. She wanted her child should become alive again. She wanted some medicine to bring her son back to life. People called her mad. At last, she came across a man. He advised her to meet the Buddha. She approached Buddha with a request to give her medicine so that her only son could he live again. After deep thought, the Buddha asked her to bring a handful of mustard seeds. But there was a condition. She must bring it from a house where no one had died. Kisa Gotami went from door-to-door to get the mustard-seed. She found mustard seeds in every home but she could not find a home where nobody had died. By evening, she was sad and tired. She saw the lights of the city. Soon there was the darkness of the night everywhere. Now she considered the fate of man. Now she realised that death is inevitable. No one can escape it. Death is must for all. It spares none.

She came back to the Buddha and asked for his blessings. The Buddha in his sermon told her that our life is brief and painful. Everyone who takes birth has to die. The vessel made by the potter is not permanent. It has to break one day. In the same way, everyone has to die. Death spares none. A father cannot save his son. Everyone grieves when someone dear dies. But grieving cannot bring the dead back to life. So death and sufferings are unavoidable. The wise persons do not grieve as they know the truth. Weeping does not bring peace to the mind. On the other hand, a person's pain becomes greater by grieving. His body also suffers. One who has learnt to control his grief shall have peace of mind. That person is blessed, who has overcome his sorrow.

ADDITIONAL SUMMARY :

1. BUDDHA'S EARLY LIFE:

Gautama Buddha (563 B.C. — 483 B.C.) was born as a prince. He was named Siddhartha Gautama. At the age of ten, he was sent away for schooling. He studied Hindu sacred scriptures. He was married to a princess at the age of sixteen. He had a son. Ten years of his married life were

spent in royal luxuries. At the age of 25, he chanced upon a sick man, then an aged man, and then a funeral procession. Finally, he saw a monk begging for alms. These sights moved him. He gave up the luxuries of royal life. He set out in search of enlightenment. After wandering for seven years, finally, he meditated under a g tree. Enlightened after seven days, he renamed the tree as the Bodhi Tree. It was the Tree of Wisdom. He became known as the Buddha — the Awakened or the Enlightened one. The Buddha preached his first sermon at Benares, the holy city on the Ganges.

2. KISA GOTAMI'S ONLY SON DIED:

Kisa Gotami's only son had died. She was deeply grieved. She carried her dead son to all her neighbours. She asked them for medicine. The people thought that she had lost her senses. At last, a man advised her to go to Sakyamuni, the Buddha. She went to him and requested to give some medicine that could to bring back life to her son.

FOCUS POINTS OF THE STORY

1. Gautama Buddha was born a prince. He was named Siddhartha Gautama.
2. He was married at the age of sixteen and enjoyed the royal luxuries for ten years.
3. He had a son. Up to the age of twenty-five, he was shielded from the sufferings of the world.
4. The sight of a sick man, then an aged man, and a funeral procession shocked him.
5. Finally, he saw a monk begging for alms.
6. He gave up royal pleasures and set out to seek enlightenment.
7. He wandered for seven years and finally sat down under a big tree in meditation.
8. Enlightenment came to him after seven days.
9. He named the big tree the Bodhi Tree or Tree of Wisdom.
10. He was known as the Buddha or the Awakened or the enlightened one.
11. The Buddha preached his first sermon at the holy city of Benares on the River Ganges.
12. Kisa Gotami's only son had died.
13. She had lost her senses and carried the dead boy to all her neighbours.
14. She asked them for medicines to cure him.
15. She prayed the Buddha to give such medicine that night to cure her son.
16. The Buddha asked Kisa Gotami to bring a handful of mustard seeds.
17. She went from house to house and had no problem in getting a handful of mustard seeds. However, she did have a problem with finding a house where no one had died.

18. She considered the fate of men and realised that she was selfish in grief.
19. Death is common to all.
20. Surrendering all selfishness leads to immortality.
21. All earthen pots end in being broken.
22. The world is afflicted with death and decay.
23. He who has overcome all sorrows, Will become blessed and enlightened one.